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553 851 This celebration could also take place in the case of a married couple who have had no children for a considerable length of time, and suddenly have a girl, whom they would like to value as a boy. A man who had no children from his first wife could also celebrate the 'sobou' of his first child—a daughter, from his second wife. The 'sobou' ceremony for the succeeding boys is usually held by the comparatively well-to-do people, and one cannot fail to note the social significance of the celebrations. It is a display of one's economic ability to be able to afford killing a ram and [554] offering wheat bread and vegetables. Thus the continuing of 'sobou' ceremony for all the boys adds to one's social prestige.

851 The third stage of his introduction is the 'balila food' with other children after the end of the forty days. *Though nothing outstanding happens* during the meal, the implication is that the child, finishing his 'angelic period', would mix with these children later.

The fourth stage is the formal and informal visits of the mother and child to other people or the latter coming to her house with presents.

846 It has been mentioned that during the first forty days the child remains in the closest contact with its mother practically throughout the whole of its waking as well as sleeping hours as she lies beside it on the mat. During most of this period the mother nurses the child while she is facing [853] it. This close bodily proximity establishes the first educational relationship for the child. Yet this is not the sole relationship, even at this period, for ● 850 the importance of other people for the child's education is symbolized by the act of 'teaching' (talkeen). For this purpose 'a good man' or 'a good woman' is chosen to perform this act with the boy or the girl respectively. The chosen person eats from a sweet thing, either a date or a piece of sugar, which would then be given to the child to suck, and this is followed by prayers for the child. Through the 'talkeen' the character of the 'good man or woman' is supposed to be transmitted to the baby. When the child grows older reference to the person who 'taught' him usually crops up in assessing his character and temperament.

846 The disposal of the child's navel cord during the first forty days is of special social significance. After cutting the boy's navel cord, the father takes it to the field, there to eat some previously prepared food. After the meal, the father buries the cord in one of the divisions of the field. The income of this section is appropriated, at least theoretically, to the boy, and his 'luck' is gauged according to the yield of that area. Sometimes the boy's cord is buried below the threshold of the Kuttab (the village Koran School) as father to the wish that he would go to the Kuttab to 'memorize the Koran'. In the case of a girl, the navel cord is buried below the threshold of the house or kept in a small box. It is quite obvious that the difference in the disposal of the navel cord reflects the distinction between the prospective spheres of work for the two sexes.

854 In discussing the early training of the child during the first three years, the first important feature that looms large is the close physical proximity

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854 garment. This cloth can be removed, washed, or just dried, or changed. The child is often wiped with another cloth, but is not necessarily washed, if it soils itself. At the fourth month it is supported between its mother's feet, sitting to defaecate when the mother senses that it is uncomfortable or when it cries, and the cloth is put on only when it goes to bed. No fuss of any kind is made about urine, while more attention is given to faeces, yet revulsion is never shown by the mother. When the child starts to walk 863 it is trained to say 'kaka' when it wants to defaecate, whereupon the mother lifts its garment and asks it to go to a special corner or room in the house or to go outside. After the age of three or four most parents insist that both boys and girls defaecate outside the house, or go to the special room in the house.

514 While the boys from now on always perform their evacuation outside, he girls are confined to the house again after they reach the age of twelve. Girls always squat for urination while boys stand, but on reaching adolescence the latter squat also. In the case of boys, the tucking up of the dress or pants and the crouching posture of evacuation tend to direct attention to the exposed genitals, while in the case of girls, after the age of six or seven at most, they, in contrast, envelop the whole process with their dress, which is never tucked up. One can see boys of all ages up to eight or nine evacuating within sight, with no sense of embarrassment. When they reach puberty they seek out-of-the-way places, facing a stone or a heap.

863 It is not without justification that one can make the hypothesis that the absence of disgust towards faeces and urine with regard to the infants' early training is a cultural way of conditioning the individual to bear tolerantly the odour that attends the village sanitary conditions, swamps, and handling of animal dung either as fertilizer or as fuel.

856 Sitting and teething are considered as important events to be watched in the child's growth. By the end of the fourth month the mother begins to train her child to sit up. The saying is that a boy of four months must be able to sit up, or he should be beaten. The girl is expected to be able to sit up a little later, at the end of the fifth month. The mother makes her son sit up on the ground with his legs outstretched, supporting his back with her hands, or puts him in a large mixing or cooking pan with tall curving sides. If the boy is not taught to sit up for himself at this age, and abandon gradually the horizontal suckling position, he would be liable to have an [827] unpleasant breath smell when he grows up.

It is also recognized that teething is accompanied by either ophthalmia [757] or diarrhoea. The mother's milk is sometimes used as a treatment for the sore eyes at this period.

● 852 On the first instance of the breaking of any of the milk teeth, at the age of five or six, the tooth is put into donkey dung and thrown into the 'sun's eye', asking the sun to change the donkey's tooth for a tooth of a gazelle.

[304] Another important event in the child's life after the end of the forty

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days is the piercing of the ridge of the ears 'while they are still soft'. The girl would have three holes in each ear, two at the top and one in the lobe, while the boy would have only two holes in the right ear, one at the top and one in the lobe. A thread is inserted into each hole so that the hole is not closed during the healing period. Immediately the punctures are healed, earrings are worn. The custom is gradually dying out in the case of boys, with the exception of the first son, whereas it is still universal with all the girls. Boys are expected to discard their silver earrings by the age of eight or nine while the girls do not discard them until they are replaced before marriage by larger golden earrings.

At the end of the second year, or normally after they are weaned, both boys and girls have their first haircut (for the girls it is actually the first and last). This is accompanied, in the case of a boy, by a dish of boiled maize called 'karama', to be eaten by whoever attends, usually small boys and poor people. The boy's head is left normally with three tufts of hair, one in the middle, and one on each side, the rest being shaved off by a razor. The girl is left with a large tuft on the top of the head, while the sides are shaved all round.

The care and handling of the infant are of great significance for this enquiry. Whenever the child is on his mother's lap, or astride her hip, or sitting or crawling beside her, he is always fussed over. Mother or visitors try to win a smile from the baby by tickling or caressing him, by turning his face outwards and then inwards and so on, or in the case of a boy by playing with his genitals. On other occasions they talk to the baby or make noises to attract his attention. A very common way of playing with the child is to support him under his arms, throw him upwards and then catch him, and this is repeated while singing to the child or talking to him.

The time of changing clothes or bathing the baby occasions the greatest amount of bodily stimulation, where not only the mother but perhaps the other children pass their hands over the child's body, calling him 'O thou fish, thy body is as smooth as the fish'. Moreover the amount of kissing on the mouth or on the cheeks that the infant experiences far exceeds any conjectures from the European point of view. Mothers have no objection to visitors kissing their children; on the contrary, it is supposed to be one of the means of 'feeling at home' to kiss the young children, or a good gesture of friendship.

As to the other features of development, such as walking and talking, the writer has found no significant differences between what he has seen in Silwa, and what he knows about the general stages of children's growth elsewhere. Here there is great variety; where some children can walk at the end of the first year, others walk a few months later, while some talk during the second year, others talk only during the third year.

The teaching of the child to walk and talk is not usually a matter for adults as much as for the older children, who usually take their siblings outside when they play. The adults do not take as active a part in teaching their children as do their older brothers or sisters.

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862 269 It was mentioned earlier that food is considered almost sacred and it was shown how this attitude towards it was instilled into the children. They call bread 'baraka' and swear by it.[1] Moreover, it is worth noting that while the children talk of, and display food freely, and have no shame about eating anywhere, adults are quite secretive and scrupulous about their food. The latter are wary of being exposed to the eye of a stranger while they are eating; they feel that if they do not ask the stranger to join them in the meal, he might have a bad effect on what they are eating. It is the custom to insist on any unexpected person joining them in eating even for one bite by saying, 'Come and say "In the Name of God".' The invited person in this case usually expresses his willingness to have a bite with the others to still any fear or suspicion, or says that he has just eaten, 'Thanks to God'. Food carried from the house to the guest house is usually covered, not necessarily for hygienic purposes, but for the fear of being 'breathed in' by onlookers. This secretive attitude towards food is usually inculcated into the children when they are old enough to be able to know when to stop eating or postpone it, if a visitor suddenly comes to the house. It is not surprising to find food as one of the major interests in children's lives in a community which divides the year into the seasons of richness and plenty, referring to the times immediately after the harvest, while [805] those times preceding it are called seasons of hunger.

852 304 The greatest experience that the child undergoes during childhood is circumcision. The boy is usually circumcised between the ages of three and six, and his circumcision is accompanied by a ceremony which is justified on religious grounds. The adult public celebration of the occasion consists of communal feasting of all the male relatives and friends invited on the evening previous to the evening of the rite, while the female relatives partake of a meal in the house. In the case of a girl's circumcision, the celebration is confined purely to women, and no man, not even the father, is expected to participate, or to show an interest in it.

Before the actual celebrations of the ceremony, the boy who is to be circumcised is taken round the village with a group of his age-mates and older boys, inviting relatives and friends in their houses to join the celebration of the occasion. Sometimes the invitation is oral, and sometimes by handing over a written invitation.

The day of circumcision arrives, and as expected during the evening communal meal, boys would be eating from separate trays apart from the [264] adults, while some of them would be serving the rest of the guests by fetching more bread, or more vegetables, and washing hands before and after the meal, while an adult would be chosen to distribute the meat from a common dish. The meal would end with the reading of 'Fatiha' to render the event successful, and expressed hope that the guests might one day attend the child's marriage ceremony, and blessings invoked for the parents and the family. The meal would be followed by reciting parts from the

[1] See Chapter I.

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Koran, and readings of the Prophet's birthday story. During all this, the children would either be sitting behind the adults or clustered in one of the corners of the house ready to execute their elders' commands.

Later on, the actual circumcising of the boy takes place. The child is now the centre of attention. He sits on the ground with a colourful girl's headcloth round his neck, while the village barber shaves his head, a task which should occupy him for three or four hours before performing the operation. Meanwhile, as the women are rejoicing by singing and playing on the tambourine inside the house, the father's invited relatives and friends would be bringing along their contributions (nakout) of money or of corn. Every time the father receives a contribution, he tells an announcer, who is a specialist for this job, that so-and-so has delivered his contribution. The announcer in a chanting voice declares that so-and-so, adding his relationship to the child if he is a close relative, or just adding paternal uncle or maternal uncle, has presented the 'bridegroom' with silver and gold, and entreats God to compensate him with all the good things in the world. The name of one contributor might be announced more than once, and this depends on the amount of contribution, and the closeness of relationship to the child. After each contribution, the village barber shaves, or at least pretends to shave, a little more of the boy's hair. When the father sees that all those whom he has invited or expected to contribute have arrived, the announcer retires, by which time the barber has finished shaving the boy.[1] Then the actual circumcision takes place by seating the child on a large vessel. The instruments for the operation are nowadays given to the barber by the Ministry of Health as well as instructions and ointment for the post-operative treatment.

Just before the operation begins, the child casts off the girl's headcloth and puts on a new garment consisting of an open white shift covered by another open green garment, similar to the type of dress which a religious person is expected to wear on certain occasions. During the operation, the boy is encouraged not to cry or show any signs of pain, otherwise he would be accused of girlishness. He is held back, and forcibly prevented from looking at his penis, otherwise it is believed he would become impotent.

This is immediately followed by a procession of men and boys followed by women and girls to visit the mosque, after which a group of female relatives and friends of the mother, together with the children, take the child to gaze on the Nile water. During all this, sweets, dates, and peanuts would be distributed. For a whole week the child, wearing charms round his neck, is not encouraged to walk, and is fed not so much on bread or meat, but mainly on boiled eggs, dried peas, salted peanuts and rice.

After a week or ten days, the circumcised boy is taken with other boys on a round asking for the 'custom' (al-'ada) from relatives and neighbours, and friends in the village. On this occasion all the boys carry palm-tree

[1] If the boy is too young for a head shave, his older brother or cousin may take his place.

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branches in their hands, and in front of every house they stand chanting at the top of their voices, while swaying their branches. They call out together, 'Give us the custom, either a pigeon, a fat hen, a cock, or an egg'. At the end of the round the group of boys return home with what they may have collected to partake of a meal well-prepared by the mother of the circumcised boy. This round is actually considered to be the female contributions to the circumcised boy and his family. In this way the boy and his age group not only witness the web of social reciprocity, but they are actively introduced to it.

The purpose of circumcising girls, according to the village midwife, is to prevent any suspicion on the bridegroom's part that the bride is not a virgin. The midwife, with her surgical instruments provided by the Ministry of Health, seats the girl on a chair, or vessel, while three women assist her by holding the girl's legs apart as well as supporting her back, a posture very similar to that assumed at childbirth. Girls are usually circumcised at a later age than the boys, when they are about seven or eight.

After the operation the legs are tied together at the thighs and ankles to prevent violent movement and thus render the operation successful. The ties are usually undone after a week or ten days, during which time the girl is fed in a similar way to the boy.

Anthropologists consider circumcision ceremonies as *rites de passage*; they are undoubtedly of great significance to the family, as well as to the child, especially if he is old enough. It is an intra-familial activity, and an occasion for the exchange of mutual obligations. The father receives his due contributions from relatives and friends to whom he has rendered such an obligation previously. Fathers keep a book, where they register those who have brought their contributions, and the amount which they have given. Traditionally, the fact that someone contributes to your ceremony counts rather than the amount of his contributions, that is, the relevant and compelling force is the carrying-out of mutual obligations on an occasion of circumcision. To illustrate this, a father who has one son should contribute to all those who have sent their contributions on the occasion of circumcising, not only their first sons, but all their sons. It is obvious here that the qualitative rather than the quantitative aspect of the social obligation is the more important. For the last ten years, however, there has been an increasing trend towards contributing on the same number of occasions as one has received a contribution from a particular person. Discussion and wrangling occasionally arise as to the appropriate way of 'give and take' on such occasions. Some people have struck a compromise so that the contributions are equalized between the same number of children, whereas the contributions towards the extra number of children are less in value and are made with a view to keeping the social relationships intact.

In ceremonies of circumcision, wedding, and preparation for pilgrimage, contributions (nakout) play a considerable part, especially in the case of

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the first two ceremonies, in covering the expenses incurred during the celebrations. It is known by the villagers that on such occasions one usually gains financially, as the person who is celebrating is paid back on one evening all that he had invested previously at different times, and thus it is a time for getting back one's savings.[1] Such reciprocal aid in these ceremonies does not make such enterprises a burdensome task in Silwa and in many other villages in the province of Aswan. This is different from the conditions obtaining in the province of Sharqiya. In 1940 Dr. Abbas Ammar reported that 11·8 of the indebtedness of the people of Sharqiya was due to expenses incurred on wedding celebrations.[2]

One often reads outright condemnation of such ceremonial celebrations which make many a fellah fall into debt. It must be remembered that the desire for the prestige connected with a sense of plenty as expressed in feasts and ceremonies is a natural human tendency. In this connection Freud says: 'A festival is a permitted, or rather an obligatory, excess, a solemn breach of a prohibition. . . . It is not that men commit the excess because they are feeling happy as a result of an injunction they have received. It is rather that excess is of the essence of a festival; the festive feeling is produced by the liberty to do what is as a rule prohibited.'[3]

It is not so important here whether one accepts Freud's argument or not; what is more vital is to realize that such ceremonial occasions provide the fellaheen with a healthy scope for the expressive elements in human behaviour and life in general, without which existence would become monotonous. To view such celebrations only as one of the main causes of the fellah's indebtedness, as some social reformers in Egypt do, ignores the social framework of valuations. Such ceremonies of circumcision, weddings, funerals, are occasions where the community gives reality to some of its social ideals and practices. They also act as a social mode of catharsis for the family and the individual concerned through which they acquire and satisfy what social psychologists call the 'sense of belonging' and the demands of group loyalty and morality.[4]

There is no doubt that the circumcision ceremony is a formal occasion for introducing the child into the wider circle of family relatives and to the whole village. This occasion is taken to express bonds of blood, affinal or friendly relationships between the family of the circumcised boy and other families. It is interesting to note that the boy's mother is the first and only female contributor in the announcement ceremony, and her contribution of corn, dates and sugar goes to the announcer. Other close relatives such as an uncle, or grandfather, have also to contribute on this

[1] This reminds the writer of one of Malinowski's findings showing that the ceremonial treatment of certain aspects of life, e.g. sex, crises of human existence, are more than the assertion of their social significance but also have a pragmatic value.

[2] Abbas M. Ammar, 'The People of Sharqiya', Ph.D. Thesis (Manchester University), 1940, pp. 428, 429.

[3] S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, London, 1950.

[4] See S. F. Nadel, *Foundations of Social Anthropology*, pp. 343–4.

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852 867 [593] occasion, even if they live with the father in the same household. Dispute between brothers or sisters is usually an irrelevant factor in the exchange of mutual contributions which are morally compulsory on such occasions. The ideal of the family solidarity must be expressed, at least formally at public ceremonies. The sociological significance of the ceremony cannot be exaggerated, as it must take place even in the case of children whose foreskin is congenitally contracted or damaged by disease. Although such [826] [776] children are believed to be circumcised by the angels, the ceremony is still held, even without any operation on the child.

852 779 Traditionally, one of the main justifications for holding the ceremony is the religious significance attached to it throughout the whole Moslem world. To be a Moslem, it is believed, is to be circumcised as distinguished from the non-Moslems, who for the most part are not circumcised. However, there is no text in the Koran that enjoins circumcision upon the Moslem, and it is only mentioned in the prophetic tradition. It is maintained that circumcision was the practice not only of the Prophet Mohammed, but all previous prophets, such as Abraham, Noah, Hud, Saleh, Joseph, Moses, and Solomon. In the prophetic sayings there is no fixed time for the performance of circumcision, as amongst the Jews; it is, however, preferable to have it done before the boy attains maturity. It is reported that the Prophet said, 'Abraham, the friend of the Merciful, was the first man who entertained guests, the first man who underwent circumcision, the first man who shortened his moustache, and the first man who saw grey hairs. He asked, on seeing the grey hairs: "O Lord, what is this?" The Almighty and Glorious Lord said: "Dignity, O Abraham." He said: "O Lord, increase dignity in me."' Another prophetic tradition says, 'Circumcision is my way for men, but is merely ennobling for women'. It is also reported that the Prophet told a woman who was just converted into Islam and was thinking of being circumcised, 'Don't inflict trouble on yourself, because that is painful to a wife, but pleasing to a husband'.[1]

852 [779] The chain of authorities for most of the Prophet's dicta about circumcision is more often than not weak, and one is justified in regarding them as open to question. The four Schools of Moslem Law differ as to the obligatory nature of circumcision.[2] The practice, however, was widespread, though not universal, in pagan Arabia, and to be uncircumcised —'aghral' or 'aghlaf'—was thought disgraceful. Modern educated Moslems might justify circumcision on hygienic grounds, but the writer did [783] not get any such explicit or implicit explanation from the villagers. For the latter, it literally means religious purification, which makes the person

[1] *Mishkat-al-Masabih*, English translation by al-Hag Maulana-Fazlul Karim, Vol. I, pp. 737–8.

[2] *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Article, 'Circumcision (Muhammadan)', by D. S. Margoliouth. In the same source under 'Circumcision (Ancient Egypt)', it is mentioned that this ritual was practised in Ancient Egypt, although there is no decisive evidence with regard to either its generality or the nature of its practice.

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fit for prayers. It is not uncommon, whether amongst children or adults, to describe a person as disgraceful by saying that he has still got the foreskin. The relation between circumcision and ceremonial purity is also confirmed by the fact that those boys whose prepuce is absent are considered to be purified by the angels. The circumcised boy's dress, that of a religious man in open white shift and a green outer garment, could be also taken as evidence for the purificatory significance of the ritual.

It must be pointed out here that the circumcision of girls has never had the universality of that of the boys; the religious authority behind it is very weak and could be rejected, and even its practice is not universal throughout the Moslem world at present. On the other hand, some of the prophetic traditions, as mentioned earlier, do not specify its desirability for the female, and the absence of such a definite religious backing for it should render its abandonment comparatively easy. It is argued that circumcision of girls, by removing the clitoris, which is regarded as the centre of excitement, is deemed necessary for ensuring pre-marital chastity.[1] Such a statement was mentioned to the writer by the midwife in Silwa before he became aware of it in anthropological literature. The need for the control of any sexual excitability is understandable in a religiously puritanic community which considers any form of emotional stimulus, either through glance or touch, from any member of the opposite sex, other than the husband or wife, as sinful.

The circumcision ceremony could be considered as a public declaration of the child's sex, with the father as socially responsible for the ceremony in the case of his son, while the mother and her female relatives solely attend to it in the case of the daughter. In other words it provides a social emphasis on the child's alignment with its sex group. The distinction between male and female circumcision is reflected in Classical Arabic by the use of two different words—'khatan' for the boy, and 'khafd' for the girl. In the colloquial language of the village, circumcision of the boy is sometimes referred to as 'cutting his pigeon' while in the case of a girl it is described as 'cutting her cockscomb'. The operation is not suddenly performed on the child, but the mother, especially in the case of her son, may attempt to prepare him gradually for the event by caressing his organ and playfully endeavouring to separate the foreskin from the glans. While doing this, she would hum words to the effect that what she is doing will help to make him to become a man amongst men. In a community with rigid sex dichotomy, it is not surprising to find that it is a great fright, or a source of great resentment, for a small boy to be threatened by his mother that she will circumcise him, and for the girl to be threatened to be circumcised by the father. Such a threat by a parent of the opposite sex to the child is considered by the parents as one of the most dire threats that can be uttered, and it is thus used to help the child in identifying himself with the parent of his own sex.

[1] *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Article on 'Circumcision', p. 666.

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The alignment of the child with its sex could be also inferred from the fact that during the ceremony the boy wears a girl's headcloth, symbolizing his last chance of indulging in any activity which is not deemed fit for males.[1] This influence has been brought to the writer's mind by the barber's comment; while wrapping the headcloth round the boy's neck, he says: 'Let us put this female cloth around you, and by making you look like a girl tonight, you will be able to avert the evil eye.' This is also obvious in the expected behaviour of the boys not to cry or show any signs of pain during the operation, in order to whiten the father's face, while the girls in contrast are expected and allowed to cry. That the difference in the expectation is due to the fact that the girl's operation is more painful than that of the boy, and hence justifiable, is one way of looking at it, but it is undoubtedly a reflection of the expected ethos of the two sexes.[2] Endurance of pain is a heroic action of the male, while crying and weeping is only expected from women. The difference of 'ethos' between the two sexes reflects itself also in their public attitudes towards a person's death. While the men solemnly gather in the guest house for the obsequies, and public demonstration of weeping is only expected from them on their return journey to the guest house after the burial, the women express their grief in almost hysterical weeping, wailing and dirging.

During the circumcision ceremony the boy's aggression is however allowed to express itself during the procession that follows the operation, as while he is carried on his way to the mosque and the Nile, he is allowed to break an egg by throwing it at any person in the procession. On the other hand, the girl is given free scope in crying, screaming and asking for help.

One cannot fail to see the connection between circumcision and marriage, the former being a preparation for the latter, and the similarities between the public celebration of the two events are striking, as will be shown later in discussing the marriage ceremony. A circumcised boy or girl is normally referred to as 'bridegroom' or 'bride' in anticipation of their future role in life. The connection between circumcision and marriage is also obvious from beliefs and rituals common to both events; the circumcised boy as well as the bridegroom must visit the mosque or gaze on the Nile. The belief is that on his or her circumcision or wedding, a person could be deprived of fertility and potency, and hence great care must be taken to avoid the evil eye, and to avoid those who are sterile and desire fertility, who may well seize the opportunity to use or cross over the circumcised or married man's instruments and clothes. The connection between circumcision and fertility could be also inferred from the

[1] Edward Lane mentions that during his time boys used to be dressed in girls' garments in the circumcision ceremony. *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, p. 59.

[2] The word 'ethos' here is used in the sense in which Bateson has defined it as 'the culturally standardized system of organization of the instincts and the emotions of individuals'. Naven, p. 220.

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fact that the mother, in taking the child to the Nile, throws his foreskin, enclosed in a loaf of bread, into the water, and washes the 'mirwad' (antimony stick) used in the operation in the waters of the Nile. This relationship is also evidenced by the fact that circumcision, like weaning, should take place at least two or three days before the appearance of the new moon, otherwise the child is liable to be 'tied up' (mushahir), the consequence of which may be that the wound might not heal quickly, or that the child might eventually be sterile.

Children show great interest in the circumcision ceremony, as it is a great occasion in which they associate with the circumcised child, eat with him, enjoy themselves, inviting people for the ceremony, or going on the children's round with their palm-tree branches, or getting sweets and peanuts during the procession. They usually tell you of the good food they had or the new clothes they wore on the occasion of their younger sibling's or cousin's circumcision. On asking some of the schoolchildren about events during which they felt happy, they invariably gave the answer of a sibling's circumcision or marriage. The educative significance of the ceremony for the older children, who witness and attend this public celebration, though indirect, is quite obvious. The social norms based on mutual obligations, the meaning of kinship and family solidarity, are concomitant in the ritual ceremony.

One cannot discuss circumcision without reference to the psycho-analytical explanation of the ritual. Freud sees in it the castration complex, which is derived from the Oedipus situation. He states that in some primitive societies circumcision is common and is performed at the age of initiation into manhood, and it was only as a secondary development that it was transferred to the early years of life. He continues: 'It is of great interest to find that among primitive peoples, circumcision is combined with cutting the hair, and knocking out of teeth, or is replaced by them, and that our children, who cannot possibly have any knowledge of this, in fact, treat these two operations, in the anxiety with which they react to them, as equivalents of castration.'[1] In Silwa such an anxiety concerning castration is evident in the adults' threatening their children to re-circumcise them even if they are already circumcised, and it manifested itself in one of the children's dreams described later.[2]

Some psycho-analysts maintain that circumcision, as an initiating ceremony of the child by his elders, helps to conduct the growing children across those difficult thresholds of life transformations that demand change in the patterns, not only of conscious, but also of unconscious life.[3] Géza Roheim maintains that circumcision represents a process of the child's growth from the passive Oedipus situation to the active orientation towards the loved object. 'The period of life which conditions the transition from

[1] S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, footnote, p. 153. [2] See Appendix XI.
[3] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Bollingen Series, New York, 1949, p. 10.

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852 mother to wife is dramatized. It is subject to operations: it is represented in symbols.'[1] The circumcision ritual, as practised in Silwa, lends itself to a considerable degree to Roheim's explanation, especially when one remembers such rituals as the disposing of the foreskin by putting it in a hole in a loaf of bread, the cleansing of the antimony stick in the Nile, the going round of the boys, holding the long palm-tree sticks in their hands, the admonition to the circumcised boy not to show his penis to anyone but his mother before it heals, as well as the other beliefs connected with fertility.

Sociologists, however, cannot be satisfied with such explanations. Viewed as an element in the totality of the cultural situation the 'castration' problem cannot be fully understood in the orthodox Freudian connotation with its biological bias. A sociological interpretation has to include the questions: Why does a child who is considered to be circumcised by 'angels' have to undergo the ceremony? Why is such an operation 852 dramatized on such an elaborate social occasion? Indeed such a ceremony 867 telescopes the individual's development as a process in which he is caught up in a net of reciprocal social obligations infused with moral and religious sanctions. Considering 'castration' in the context of social organization in Silwa, and as the villagers view it, it must be regarded as a social occasion with a religious sanction for declaring publicly the alignment of the child to his sex group. Thus, the child would identify itself with the social role of father or mother by becoming aware of the social implications and consequences of behaviour relevant to its sex group. The community submits its children to an operation around which everything is done to heighten the moral and social temperature of its culture and to induce a state of nervous super-excitation through which the youngsters may receive the adult's indelible stamp.[2]

[1] Géza Roheim, *The Eternal Ones of the Dream*, p. 16.

[2] See Edwin W. Smith, 'Indigenous Education in Africa', in *Essays Presented to C. G. Seligman*; and B. Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, London, 1927.

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and from what the woman said I fear that it was syphilis from which he was suffering. Anyhow, she told me that if the father or mother suffered in this way their children were never washed at all until they were old enough to wash themselves. Two doctor friends of mine confirmed this, stating that they knew the practice to be a common one among the peasants. As for the child which was brought to me, I am glad to say that I at last persuaded the mother to wash it to a certain extent, and I gave her some medicine. This happened a few years ago, and on my visiting the same village again some time later I was glad to hear that the child was well and flourishing.

FIG. 35. FROCK AND HOOD MADE OF SACKING

The same woman had lost several children in early infancy before this particular infant was born. The child was wearing a peculiar dress, made of sacking, and with a hood in one piece with the frock (Fig. 34). The woman informed me, and I have been told the same thing by others, that this dress was put on the child to make it live. The dress must always be made out of a sack which has contained raw cotton; no other kind will do. Two such dresses were made and given to me (see Fig. 35).

On the seventh day after the birth a midwife comes and washes the child, as stated above, and also the mother. The water used

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for washing the child is obtained the night before and put into a metal jug with a long spout called an *ibrīḳ*. This is stood in a metal basin, and both are placed near the mother and child. The water is called *moiyet el-ṭalāyikeh* (water of the angels), angels meaning in this connexion the *ḳarīn* of the father, the *ḳarīneh* of the mother, and the *ḳarīn* (or *ḳarīneh*) of the child. The *ibrīḳ* is decorated in different ways according to the sex of the child. On the occasion of the birth of a boy I observed that a rosary (*sibḥeh*) belonging to the father was twisted round the *ibrīḳ*, while a handkerchief belonging to the boy's sister was tied round the top of the vessel. On another occasion, when a girl was born, the mother's gold necklace and some brightly coloured silk handkerchiefs were fastened round the *ibrīḳ* (see Fig. 36). This decoration is done, so I was told, to appease the *malāyikeh*, who would then do no harm to the child or its mother. After the child has been washed a man of the same age as the father of the infant must drink the water that remains over in the *ibrīḳ*. It is believed that this will ensure the child's growing up into manhood.

FIG. 36. YOUNG MOTHER AND CHILD WITH DECORATED IBRĪḲ

On the seventh night (*i.e.*, the evening preceding the seventh day) two or three large baskets, each containing salt, beans, seed of *ḥelbeh* (fenugreek), lentils, wheat, clover, and maize, are placed in the room occupied by the mother and child. Sometimes one of the baskets may be filled with bread, this being often in the form

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of rings. On one of the baskets is placed a large winnowing sieve, in which the child sleeps all night. When the midwife comes on the following morning, and both mother and child have been washed, some of the grains from one of the baskets are put in the sieve, the baby also being placed in it. The midwife then tosses and shakes the baby in the sieve, its mother meanwhile banging the edge of the metal basin with a tin mug. The striking of the basin by the mother is not, I believe, always done, but on one occasion when I was present at this ceremony the mother acted in this way. The tossing and shaking of the child in the sieve is repeated several times, after which the grains are returned to the basket. The midwife now takes the child in her arms, and covers it with a cloth of white cotton on which are placed some of the grains from one of the baskets. Having first carried the child into all the rooms on the ground floor, she then goes outside the house, sprinkling some of the grains wherever she walks, and repeating "*Ṣalla 'a 'n-Nebi*" ("Bless the Prophet") over and over again during the whole of her perambulation.

FIG. 37. UMBILICAL CORD IN COTTON WRAPPING, AND OTHER CHARMS SUSPENDED FROM IT

Left to right: twisted iron wire, string of seven grains of beans, and bag containing samples of the seven ingredients of one of the baskets.

The child is now taken back into the mother's room, and the midwife blackens its eyes with *kohl*, a bottle of which she has brought with her. She dips a feather into the *kohl*, and, having opened the child's eyes, passes the feather across each of them in turn. After thus painting the eyes she fastens round the child's neck the cotton case containing a piece of the umbilical cord, to which are

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attached a string of seven grains of beans and a little cotton bag containing a small quantity of the seven ingredients of one of the baskets (Fig. 37).

The midwife's fee consists of a large basket (Fig. 38) of maize, bread, dates, various nuts, and occasionally a little money.[1]

Some of the six various grains, together with the salt, are often given to the father to scatter over his fields. This is a fertility charm, and is believed to ensure his having good crops.

FIG. 38. MIDWIFE CARRYING HER WAGES ON HER HEAD

In addition to the charms mentioned above, the child sometimes has another one made of thick iron wire twisted into a particular shape (Fig. 37). This is also hung round the child's neck, but only so if, when it cries, it clenches its hands and shakes itself.

In some parts of Upper Egypt the following mixture is put into a child's eyes by the midwife on the seventh day. The woman brings an onion with her and squeezes the juice from it into a small coffee-cup, mixing with it salt, oil, and, usually, *koḥl* also. Then, taking a feather, she dips it into the mixture and, opening the child's eyes, brushes the feather right across them. It is believed that this will give the child wide open and beautiful eyes.

The naming of the child is part of the seventh-day ceremony. If the parents are anxious to discover the best and luckiest name for their offspring they proceed as follows. Candles, usually four

[1] Sometimes she is, I believe, paid only in grain.

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in number, sometimes of different colours, are procured, and a different name is inscribed on each. All these candles are lighted at once, and the name on the candle which burns the longest is the one eventually bestowed on the child. After it has received a name the birth is entered in the Government archives, the name of the child's mother only being given; the father's name is not entered at all.

Boys are more highly valued than girls, and special precautions have to be taken when a male child is born to protect him from the evil eye. Sometimes the midwife is bribed to keep the sex of the child a secret, and if she is paid a sufficiently large sum of money she will consent to give out to the villagers that the child is a girl. I was told of a case of a woman who had given birth to a boy not knowing the sex of the child until it was thirty days old or more, and her husband was equally ignorant.

As a further protection from the evil eye a boy is often dressed as a girl for two years or so, all the villagers, presumably, being led to think that the child is a girl.

Women are supposed to suckle their children for two years, but if a woman again conceives before the end of this period she must, of course, wean her last-born child. When this happens she hangs a 'date of jealousy' round the child's neck to prevent its being jealous of the baby when it is born. I once witnessed a most frantic display of jealousy on the part of a very young child when he saw his mother with the newly arrived infant in her arms. He flung himself upon her in a fury of envious rage. The 'dates of jealousy' in some parts of Egypt are acorns; in other parts they are made of a kind of earth moulded into the form of a date stone.

If a child cries very much the mother will sometimes purchase a very small copy of the Ḳorān and hang it round the child's neck. It is believed that if the child begins to cry and then looks at the Ḳorān which it is wearing it will immediately stop weeping. Such small editions of this sacred book are also worn by a child to keep it well and to ensure its living. When used for this purpose the book is sewn up in a cotton case.

If, after long waiting, a woman at last bears a son a festival, or *mūlid*, is held. There are various kinds of *mawālid* (plural of *mūlid*) held for different reasons and on various occasions, and among them is that held in celebration of the birth of a son. It is a kind of thanksgiving on the part of the parents, and is also

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believed to be beneficial to the child. I have been present at one or two such ceremonies, and the following description is typical of all.

A ram had been purchased for sacrifice, and the services of a butcher engaged for the slaughter of the animal. When I arrived at the house I was conducted on to the roof, where various members of the family were awaiting me. The ram was also there, in happy ignorance of its fate. Presently the butcher arrived, and when he had ascertained that his knife was sufficiently sharp the poor animal was made to lie on the ground on its back. Then with a "*Bismillāh er-Raḥmān er-Raḥīm*" ("In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful") the butcher cut the ram's throat. I must confess that I did not see this part of the performance, for I closed my eyes and blocked up my ears, telling the people to let me know when it was all over. The carcass of the animal was then hung up and skinned. The skin was, I believe, given to the butcher, in recognition of his services. A good deal of the blood was preserved in a large bowl, and the house-door was sprinkled with it, a large dab of it being smeared on the centre.

The reason for the slaughtering of the ram at a *mūlid* for a child may be that a life is thus given for a life, and so this sacrifice of the animal will ensure the life of the child.

The child's mother and some of her female relatives now set to work to prepare the meat and cook it for the large number of guests who would assemble at the house in the evening, while I retired for a short rest. At about seven o'clock I returned to the house, where great preparations had been made, and where a considerable number of visitors had already assembled. The seat of honour had been reserved for me, and soon after I arrived a sheikh celebrated for his excellent chanting of the Ḳorān entered with his assistants. I had brought a number of boxes of cigarettes with me, and some of these were now handed round by my servant, while coffee was brought for me. Newcomers constantly arrived, till every available seat had been taken, both on benches and on the floor, and then the sheikh began to recite. Such recitations are always intoned, and are repeated entirely from memory. The performer nearly always places a hand against one side of his face while he recites, and sways in rhythmic accompaniment to his chanting. This particular sheikh is renowned for his voice,

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and warm exclamations of approval were heard on all sides as he proceeded. Finally he stood up on a high bench, and, one hand against his face and the other holding a rosary, worked himself up to an even greater pitch of fervour, gesticulating with the hand which held the beads. The audience too became more and more enthusiastic, and there were constant cries of "*Yā sheikh!*" ("O sheikh!"), "*Aiwa, keda!*" ("Yes, thus!"), as we might say, "Yes, go on!" One man at last got so beside himself with emotional fervour that he rose abruptly from his seat, tore off his turban, which he hurled at the sheikh, and then clasped him by the knees. Others too followed his example, flinging themselves in admiration on the sheikh.

When the recitations had gone on for some time there was a pause, and more coffee was handed round, and also more of my cigarettes. During this interval one of the sheikh's assistants went the round of the guests, to inquire of each whether he desired a *Fātiḥeh* to be repeated for himself, or for friends, the latter being mentioned by name. Each person presented the assistant with a small sum of money. Very many *Fātiḥehs* were said for me and for my family, while I made similar requests for several of my village friends. Then the recitations began again, and shortly after there was another pause as before. I am afraid to say how many boxes of cigarettes I distributed, but I do know that they were thoroughly appreciated.

This performance was continued till nearly midnight, when at last I rose to take leave of my friends. My departure broke up the assembly, and the rest of the guests quickly dispersed to their several homes. I was told afterward that it was one of the most successful *mawālid* that had ever been held; never had they had so many cigarettes to smoke, and never had the sheikh and his assistants received so much money! I regret to say that the child for whose benefit this *mūlid* was held died rather suddenly before I left Egypt.

Among the Copts the child receives its name at baptism, when the parents take it to the church. Total immersion is the recognized form of baptism among the Copts, and, according to Dr A. J. Butler,[1] the rite is permissible only in certain seasons of the year, and no child should be baptized during Lent, Holy Week, or at Eastertide. The same authority also states that a boy must be

[1] *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt* (Oxford, 1884), vol. ii. p. 264

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forty days old and a girl eighty before they can receive this sacrament.[1]

Exception to this rule is made in cases of grave illness. According to my informant, the water for baptism is contained in a tank in the ground. After asking the mother what name is to be given to the child the priest dips the infant into the water three times, each time repeating the name chosen for it. The child is then returned to its mother, who dresses it, and then the priest takes a silken thread, which the mother has brought with her, and places it round the child, passing it under its left arm. He then ties this thread into a knot with a loop. A certain number of prayers are repeated, after which a few drops of the Eucharistic wine are given to the child to drink. Most of the people who have been present at this ceremony now take their departure, but the parents, with the child, remain in the church while the choir sing certain chants. The priest then questions the parents as to their willingness to bring up the child with a knowledge of the Christian religion, impressing on them how great their responsibility is with regard to the proper religious instruction of their child.

When the ceremony is over the parents give the priest some money, the amount varying according to their means, and then the priest unties the knot he made in the silken thread.

In all Egyptian villages a number of little boys may be seen with their heads shaved save for a few tufts of hair, which are left untouched. Each of such tufts is dedicated, in the case of Muslims, to a sheikh, or to a saint if the child's parents are Copts, or sometimes all the tufts are dedicated to one sheikh or saint. I am told that there is no *special* age for the hair to be cut in this way, but I believe it is always done in very early childhood, probably as soon as the hair has grown, for I have never seen any but young children with these tufts of hair left on their heads. The ceremonial cutting off of the tufts is not, so far as I have discovered, performed at any particular age of boyhood, but the date of the performance seems to depend on whether the father can afford the expense that the ceremony entails, such expense in some parts of Upper Egypt being considerable. It has never been suggested to me that the ceremony takes place when the boy has reached the age of puberty. Indeed, as far as my own experience goes, the tufts were removed long before that period was reached.

[1] *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt* (Oxford, 1884), vol. ii, p. 263.

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When it is desired that the tufts shall be shaved off quite an important ceremony takes place—at least, according to my informant, in Asyūṭ Province. When possible the child is taken to the tomb or tombs of the sheikh or sheikhs to whom the tufts of hair are dedicated, and the tufts are removed just within, or just outside, the sacred building (Fig. 39), or the child may be taken to a mosque, where the ceremony can also be performed. If the child is a Copt it is taken to the church or churches named after the saint or saints to whom these tufts of hair have been dedicated. In the case of the Muslims the village barber is called in to remove the hair, but with the Copts a priest performs the rite. The removal of these tufts takes place if possible when the hair is four to five centimetres long, but in parts of Upper Egypt the ceremony is so expensive for a poor *fellāḥ* that the child may have to wait some time longer before the tufts can be removed. Bread and meat are taken to the tombs or mosques where the ceremony is to be performed, and then a feast is held to the accompaniment of dancing, beating of the drum (*darābukkeh*), hand-clapping, and *zaghārīṭ*.[1] The barber on these occasions may demand quite a large sum of money, and altogether the ceremony rarely costs less than six pounds, often more.

FIG. 39. CHILD ABOUT TO HAVE ITS TUFTS OF HAIR CUT OFF AT THE TOMB OF THE SHEIKH UMBĀRAK

The man on the right is the barber.

[1] The shrill cries of joy uttered by women on all festive occasions.

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F 302 852 718

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I myself witnessed the performance of the rite in Fayûm Province, where the proceedings were simpler. The child whose tufts were to be removed was taken to the tomb of the sheikh Umbārak, to whom they had all been dedicated. The barber arrived and shaved off the hair just within the entrance to the tomb. On this occasion the child was held by the sister-in-law of the child's mother, but I do not think there is any fixed rule as to who should act in this capacity. There was no feast or dancing, but such festivities may take place also in this province, though they are not necessary, as I was told was the case in Asyûṭ Province. The child's mother is a friend of mine, and as I paid the barber's fee myself I managed, with the assistance of the woman who held the child, to secure half the hair that had been cut off. The cut-off hair is always buried outside the tomb or mosque where it has been cut off, and is put in the ground either loose [1] or else is first enclosed in a clay ball. On the occasion when I was present at this ceremony the hair was enclosed in a clay ball and buried outside the sheikh Umbārak's tomb, and half was kept back and put in another clay ball and presented to me. The ball in my possession is somewhat flattened at the base, owing to the fact that the clay of which it is made was rather moist, and the placing of the ball outside the house to sun-bake naturally flattened that portion which rested on the ground.

F C 302 852 718

As stated above, Coptic parents take their children to have the tufts removed at the church or churches, or sometimes it may be to the tomb or tombs, of the saint or saints to whom the tufts of hair are dedicated. The priest, as has also been stated, officiates as barber, the father presenting a gift of money to the church or churches where the tufts are removed. On such an occasion a special service is held at the church, and oxen and fowls are killed outside the building, the meat, together with bread, being distributed among the assembled crowd of friends and the poor. If the parents are not rich enough to supply such a munificent feast they will bring a smaller quantity of meat with them, and will distribute it and the bread to the crowds which always collect outside the building on these occasions; in such cases no sacrifices are made. Among the Copts no dancing takes place at this ceremony as among the Muslims, but the women utter the cries of joy (*zaghārīṭ*), and there is a good deal of singing.

F C [431]

F C [535] [151]

I have been told that if a woman remains for a long time after

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[1] See my article in *Man*, vol. xxv, Pl. E, Fig. 4.

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I have been told that if a woman remains for a long time after marriage without the prospect of a child she will pray for a son, promising that, in the event of her prayer being answered, she will have the boy's hair shaved, leaving only the tufts, which she will dedicate to the sheikh or sheikhs, or to the saint or saints, with whom she has interceded. When offering such prayers she will probably repair to the tomb of the sheikh, or to the church of the Coptic saint, to whom she wishes to appeal. I was told in Fayūm Province that if a boy is seen with his hair cut into tufts it means that he is an only son, and that this style of headdress will ensure him a long life. The initial cutting of the hair, it should be pointed out, is performed at home.

F 782 892 F [178] F [761]

Among the Copts the rite of circumcision should be observed before baptism, according to Dr Butler.[1] The actual ceremony closely resembles the Muslim rite, so that the following description applies to the followers of both religions, the only difference being that whereas the Coptic child should have this operation before baptism, for the Muslim there is no limitation as to age, though it is always carried out during the early years of a child's life. The ceremony entails a certain expense, and is therefore sometimes carried out conjointly with a marriage ceremony, so that the cost may be shared.

F C 852 ● 304 F [302]

The boy who is to undergo this operation has his hands and feet dyed with *ḥenna* at sunset two days before it takes place. On the following day the barber comes and cuts the boy's hair in a particular way, called *muḳarraṣ*, which means 'made into little loaves or cakes.' I do not think that this form of hairdressing is in any way connected with the tufts of hair described above. After the haircutting the boy is washed, and, so I was told, coins are put on his face. This is probably the same custom as is observed at weddings, when the female visitors who wish to present the bride with small sums of money go up to her and place the coin they wish to give to her on her upturned face. In the case of the boy the money presented in this way is taken by the barber. The boy then has a particular kind of felt cap placed on his head. This cap, which is white in colour, decorated with yellow designs and tassels (Fig. 40), is purchased by the parents especially for the occasion, and worn only for this rite. The cap is further decorated by the attachment of scraps of coloured paper or bits of cloth or muslin. The boy, thus attired, is then placed on a horse, usually, I believe, with his face toward the animal's tail; he is covered up with a shawl, and, with one man holding him securely and another leading

F C [463] F C [431] [465] F C [292]

[1] See my article in *Man*, vol. xxv, p. 263.

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the horse, he is paraded through the village, accompanied by musicians. If two brothers are to have this operation at the same time they ride together on one horse. When the perambulation of the village is over the boy is taken home, and all the friends who have placed money on his face, and also the barber, are provided with supper. Music plays an important part at this ceremony, and the musicians keep up a constant beating of drums, clashing of cymbals, and blowing of bagpipes. When the guests have finished supper they all, including the musicians, take their departure. On the following morning the barber only comes to the house and is first paid by the parents, who give him anything from one or two pounds upward. The child is then taken hold of and told not to be afraid. Some one tries to attract his attention, while the barber seizes this opportunity to cut off the foreskin. The boy wears a white *gallabīyeh* for this occasion, with long sleeves, in one of which the foreskin is tied up. The barber then ties the boy's mother and maternal aunt together by binding a turban round their throats, and drags them outside the door of the house. Friends, who by this time have collected outside, come into the house and present the barber with more money, and he then takes his departure. The wound is washed every day, and is anointed with some healing powder, which is, I fancy, *ḥenna*. The foreskin remains in the sleeve of the boy's *gallabīyeh* until the wound is healed, during which period the white gown must also be worn.

FIG. 40. CAP WORN BY A BOY AT HIS CIRCUMCISION CEREMONY

A charm consisting of short lengths of the mid-rib of a palm-branch, deeply notched along one side, is worn by boys after they have been circumcised to keep the wound from going septic, and to ward off the evil eye. Such a charm is worn for seven days after the operation, being suspended from the neck by a string.

No reason could be given as to why the mother and maternal aunt were tied together by the throat and thrust out of the house.

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

I suggest that it may possibly be a way of emphasizing the fact 852 ●
that the boy has now definitely joined the male community by undergoing this operation, and that therefore he is no longer under the control of his mother and her female relatives. This is a pure guess, and is brought forward only as a possible explanation of this somewhat curious custom.

It is a common belief all over Egypt that the souls of twins 794
when they have passed babyhood often leave their bodies at night 825
and enter the bodies of cats. These animals, therefore, are usually 845
very kindly treated. The following stories were told me in connexion with this belief, and my informant declared that they were true and that he knew the people concerned.

In a small village in Asyūṭ Province there was a boy who was one of twins, his twin, however, being dead. One night a cat came to a house and clambered on to the flat roof, upon which were some [251]
of the usual mud granaries. Some *kishk*, which is made of wheat [262]
mixed with milk, dried in the sun, and then cut up, was stored in [574]
one of these receptacles. It is often offered to visitors as a great delicacy. The cat knocked the lid off the granary which contained the *kishk*, jumped into it, and began to eat some of the contents. A member of the household happened to go on to the roof, and, seeing the granary uncovered, immediately put the lid on it without noticing that the cat was inside. It remained covered for three days, keeping the cat a prisoner. During this period the boy men- 753
tioned above remained motionless and unconscious on his bed, his 794
soul being in the body of the imprisoned cat. 845

After the third day some visitors arrived at the house where was the granary in question, and one of the family went to get some of the *kishk* out of it to offer the guests. When the lid was removed the cat jumped out and ran away. Immediately after this the soul of the twin returned to his body, and he rose from his bed quite well.

One evening a cat in whose body the soul of a twin happened to be temporarily incarnate was struck on the head by a woman. On the following day the twin in question came to this woman and accused her of striking him the previous night, pointing out to her exactly where she had hit him, and complaining that the blow had caused him considerable pain.

If a cat is killed while the soul of a twin is in its body the twin 761
dies also. For this reason cats are rarely killed. 794
825
845

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idea is, I suppose, that it is on the first camel that the eye would be cast. A pattern is sometimes cut in the hair on one or more of the legs of a camel. I was told that this is often done to keep the evil eye off that part of the animal's body. For if its legs are firm and well covered with flesh some one may cast the eye over it, and the camel will fall down.

A certain woman in Upper Egypt who was well known to possess the evil eye saw a very fine camel coming along one of the paths in the cultivation. "Oh," she said, "what a splendid camel!" whereupon the animal fell down and broke one of its legs. The truth of this story was vouched for by my informant, who declared that he saw the accident happen and heard what the woman said.

If a child under eight years of age is thin and delicate the mother, or, if her husband will not allow her to do so, a neighbour, will carry it to the bank of the Nile on the first day of the inundation, taking with her some dates and *kishk*.[1] She then stands at the edge of the water, holding the child in her arms, and makes it throw the dates and *kishk*, one by one, into the river. As the child throws in each article it must say to the water, "As you increase in depth, may I increase in strength!" After this the woman undresses the child and bathes it in the river. It is believed that the child will then grow steadily stronger. Angels are supposed to be in the water, and they, it is thought, will take the dates and the *kishk*, and, in return for these gifts, will remove the weakness from the child.

A child may suffer from a cough accompanied by gasping, as if it could hardly breathe. This may happen at any time until it has passed the age of seven years.[2] To cure it the mother, or grandmother (either paternal or maternal), or a woman friend, takes the child early in the morning to the enclosure (*zarībeh*) in which the sheep and goats are kept in the fields at night. She enters the *zarībeh* and hands the child over to the shepherd, who lays it on its back on the ground, and, taking a knife, places the blunt edge against the child's throat, pretending to cut it. The child will then start crying, whereupon the man will remove the knife and return the child to the woman who brought it.

Sheep are regarded as very gentle animals, and are supposed

[1] Small cakes, sometimes round like large marbles, and made of flour and milk.
[2] After this age the mother's *ḥarīneh* cannot injure it. For fuller information on this subject see pp. 71 ff.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

In modern Egypt a child is suckled for two years (p. 81); in ancient Egypt, according to the passage in the *Wisdom of Anii* quoted on p. 283, it was not weaned till it was three years old.

On p. 82, in describing the slaughter of a victim at a festival held on behalf of a child, I stated that the animal was placed on its back and its throat cut, and that a quantity of the blood was preserved in a bowl. Victims were slain exactly in this manner at ancient Egyptian festivals. In almost every decorated tombs chapel they are depicted extended on their backs with the butchers cutting their throats. Occasionally in these scenes an assistant is

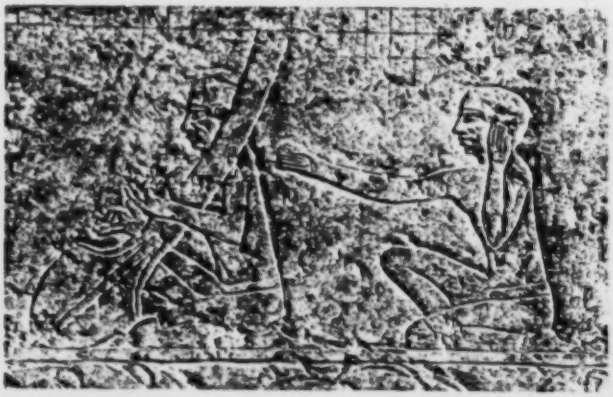

FIG. 160. ANCIENT HARPER AND VOCALIST
After A. M. Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*, Part II, Pl. III.

shown holding a large bowl,[1] evidently to catch the blood (Fig. 159). Did the practice of smearing the door with blood exist in Egypt as far back as the Old Kingdom? The blood was evidently required for some ceremonial purpose, otherwise what need would there have been for the basin?

To sing or recite with one hand laid against a side of the face and the other hand extended (p. 82) is a very ancient practice (Fig. 160), and so, too, is the throwing of one's clothes about as a sign of admiration and rejoicing (p. 83). Thus in one of the *Pyramid Texts*,[2] dating from about 2600 B.C., we read how the dead king, having reached the celestial realm of the sun-god,

[1] A. M. Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*, Part I (London, 1914), Pl. XI; *cf.* also Part IV (London, 1924), p. 27; P. Montet, *Les scènes de la vie privée dans les tombeaux égyptiens de l'ancien empire* (Strassburg, 1925), p. 165.

[2] K. Sethe, *Die altägyptischen Pyramidentexte*, Spruch 518.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5
Copts MR10

"found the gods waiting, wrapped in their garments, their white sandals on their feet. Then cast they their sandals to the ground, then threw they off their garments. 'Our heart was not glad until thou camest,' said they."

The custom of shaving, in performance of a vow, a boy's head save for a number of tufts, which are dedicated to one or more Muslim or Coptic saints, and of ceremonially cutting off the tufts when they have grown to a certain length (pp. 84 ff.), is evidently very ancient. Clay balls containing infantile hair, such as are

FIG. 161. ANCIENT CLAY BALLS FROM EL-'AMARNEH, ONE BROKEN AND SHOWING INFANTILE HAIR INSIDE

described on p. 86, have been found both at el-'Amarneh (Fig. 161) and in a Twentieth-Dynasty tomb at el-Lāhūn.[1] Herodotus[2] seems to be referring to this or some very similar custom when he says:

> All the inhabitants of the cities perform their vows to the keepers [of the sacred animals] in the following manner. Having made a vow to the god to whom the animal belongs, they shave either the whole heads of their children, or a half, or a third of the head, and then weigh the hair in a scale against silver, and whatever the weight may be, they give to the keeper of the animals; and she in return cuts up some fish, and gives it as food to the animals. Such is the usual mode of feeding them.

Circumcision (pp. 87 f.) seems to have been practised universally in ancient times (as it is in modern Egypt) until the reign of the Emperor Hadrian, when it was restricted to candidates for the

[1] W. S. Blackman, *Man*, vol. xxv, pp. 65 ff.
[2] ii, 65.

843 avoids looking at any dead person, and gazes on portraits of handsome men, perhaps magazine cuttings that she has pinned on the wall. She must be able to eat what she likes. If she is thwarted, the child will be seriously affected.

846 783 [852] Immediately after birth the baby is put in a basket, which serves as a cradle, and is not washed for seven days. The first bath has a ritual significance of purification. It is given by the midwife, and the water is poured from a pot (*abriq*) specially kept for this purpose, with different ornamentation for a girl and for a boy. The mother is technically impure for thirty or forty days after, according as the child is a girl or a boy. These Moslem customs are also found in Morocco.

844 [431] If at the moment of birth the father is working in the fields, and the child is a son, a friend will run and tell him the good news, for which he can claim a gift. This tradition recalls a text in Jeremiah: 'Cursed be the man who took the tidings to my father, saying to him "A son is born", and who filled him with joy'. (Ch. XX, v.15).

777 751 As soon as the child is born, a blue bead is hung round his neck to turn away the evil eye. For the same reason the boy of whom his parents are so proud may be dressed like a girl, till he is weaned. His mother will give him suck for two years at least, at far too frequent intervals, thus 853 causing gastric troubles. This is the length of time favoured 842 by the ancient Egyptians, by the black peoples of Africa, 536 and by Koranic precept: "Divorced mothers shall give suck to their children for two full years" (Sura II, 233). The peasant women think that by weaning late they will delay another pregnancy.

854 482 When the time comes for her to go out — and this happens very soon — she carries the infant astride her shoulder, which does not prevent her from carrying a pot full of water on her head. While she is working in the fields she puts her baby on the ground, near the path which threads the crops, in the shadow of the maize. The baby does not always have something to lie on, but rolls in the furrow, puts earth in its mouth, screams, sleeps and gets used to it all. If it cries 853 too loud, any passing mother will give it her breast.

854 857 The child stays at home until his fifth year. He soon gets used to the company of the animals there. Before long he is capable of looking after them and can take the

donkey to the fields and the *gamoosa* to the canal, where he climbs on its back and sets it turning the *saqia*. The child learns how to cry out, how to chase off thieving birds with stones, how to pick and even plant cotton. He does not lack amusement, for he has plenty of companions. During the day, when the men are toiling in the fields and the women are busy in the house or by the canal, the whole village belongs to the children. It is they whom a visitor sees first. They paddle stark naked in the pond, and learn to swim. They have bulging bellies, for they eat anything and everything. They play in the dust, spinning an onion as a top, hopping on one leg and holding the other heel with their hands, or shooting with a catapult (*nibla*) at date-palms or birds. When they are a little older they play at *siga*, a kind of marble game with small pebbles which have to be moved into forty-nine holes made in the sand.

At about the age of seven the young fellah is circumcised, and thus introduced into the world of men. At this stage he has to go to the elementary school (*ilzamiya*), at least in the mornings. His parents are bound to send him, under pain of a fine of twenty piastres, or fifty for a second offence. 95% of the fellaheen are illiterate, and the Government wishes to wipe out this disgrace from the next generation. The 1923 Constitution decreed that education should be compulsory, but it is only since 1935 that this order has begun to take effect. Schools are being established all over the countryside. Gradually sites are being found in the villages, schools set up, and teachers appointed. Every year, places that within living memory had never seen a teacher are provided with a complete teaching staff. In 1946 there should be 4,600 free elementary schools, and the whole child population will be receiving instruction (41).

The parents do not understand these new ideas. Though accustomed to other tyrannical institutions, they do not resign themselves to this. Some Upper Egyptians of 'Ezbet Balkan, who had been fined for not sending their children to the compulsory Government school, attacked the teachers and wounded them. The peasants care little for education. They only want their children to help them to increase their earnings. Moreover, most villages are still served, according to the ancient system, by a *kuttab*, in which a blind teacher, seated on the ground, gathers a few children round him and teaches them the Koran.

or like a silver thread in the distance. He resorts to it more often than to his fellowmen. He does not pray to it, as his ancestors did, but he constantly visits it. The Nile is in his blood. There is the same intimate bond between the Nile and the fellaheen as between the sea and the fishermen of Brittany. They even call it *el Bahr*, the sea, and their fields they call "shores" (*el rîf* — plural *el ariaf* — the usual word for the Egyptian countryside) (ʻa). At High Nile they believe women to be more fertile and men more healthy; marriages are most often celebrated at this season. If a child is sickly or ill, his mother takes him on the Nile at this time, and makes him throw sweets and dates into the clayey waters, with the words "Oh Nile, let my strength grow like your depth". A dying fellah, before he breathes his last, is given a final draught of its living water.

In the Coptic Mass there is the following prayer: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to bless this year the water of the river. By Thy grace bring it to due height. Gladden the face of the land, that the fields may have water and the crops be multiplied."

The silt of the Nile has its part also in the rites of life and death. The fellâha, when her time is coming, crawls to the brink of the water and takes up a handful of moist earth, which she will swallow at the time of delivery to ensure a successful birth.

When the *mizayen* cuts the child's hair for the first time, the hair ceremoniously cut off is not flung to the winds, but carefully rolled into a ball of earth.

Professional mourners bedaub their breasts, heads, and arms with mud as a sign of grief. The body is put into the earth without either coffin or clothes.

The fellaheen bury in the earth the jar containing their savings, and charms which they wish to take effect. Every birth affects the soil; the after-brith is buried inside the house, and the umbilical cord, wrapped up in a little bag with a few grains of corn, is dug into the father's field.

The fruits of the earth are still more closely involved in this peasant mysticism. The analogies between vegetable life and the peasants' own extremely physical existence make them believe in an interplay of fertility between the two.

The ceremonies of the seventh day, when the newly-born child is washed and given a name, often include the following

553 852 rite. Three rush baskets filled with different kinds of grain are brought into the room. One supports the sieve in which the infant is lying. When it is time for the bath, the midwife shakes the sieve, as if to sift both the child and the corn. Then she puts the grain back into the basket, wraps up the child and sprinkles a few grains upon it.

853 243 431 465 The word *fitâma*, used for the weaning of children, is also used for the tenth and last watering of the maize. Sweet cakes are given to the workers that day, as to the mother, for it is the last day of suckling.

243 777 789 Harvest is always accompanied by symbolic acts. Before reaping begins, the best ears are taken and plaited into a kind of doll called the 'Bride of the Corn', which is hung up in the house to bring good luck during the ensuing year. Similarly, to bind the chain of life, the biggest grains are mixed with the seed for the next sowing, and a few fine loaves are slipped into the heap on the threshing-floor to be winnowed and sieved.

782 789 Mgr Khouzam, reporting on his pastoral visit in November 1937, wrote as follows: "On entering their houses, I blessed water, bread and corn. They drank some of the water and used the rest to sprinkle themselves, their cattle and their houses. The corn they flung into their fields. As for the bread, I was made to break it and eat a little of it. The rest they kept among their stores that God might bless what they had laid by."

189 465 431 735 248 The joy of harvest shines also on those who have not ploughed, but whose work in the village has benefited the whole community. Tradition allots the first fruits of the harvest to the reciter, the barber, the cantor of the mosque, the schoolmaster and the carpenter. After these have claimed their sheaves, the poor come to glean their share. Cotton-picking, however, gives rise to no sort of ceremony. This is perhaps because cotton has only recently been introduced; or because it is grown for profit and not for daily bread (").

245 The date palm, on the contrary, is as old as Egyptian agriculture *itself*, and figures at all times in the life of the people. They turn to this tree for shade and for roofing, for beds and coops, for ropes and brushes. We have seen its

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

39.

The New Railway.

539x 496 [785] [103] [31]

A girl, named Dināre wishes to go to Ṭanṭa, to the tomb of Shēkh Aḥmed. (Compare No. 8—9.) At the time of the origin of this little song, the railroad from Cairo to Alexandria had probably just been built. (It was opened in 1856.) Ṭanṭa lies in the province of Ḳarbîye, about fifty-four miles from Cairo, on the railroad between Cairo and Alexandria; the capital of the province of Beḥêre, Damanhûr, lies on the same railroad, still nearer to Alexandria, something over thirty-six miles from Ṭanṭa.

Dināre 'alet: Yamma,
ana rāiḥe-s-Seiyid azūr,
warāḥ balad el-Beḥēre
watfarraǧ 'al-bagūr.

Dināre said: "Mother,
I am going to visit the Seiyid
And going to Beḥēre
To look at the railway".

Circumcision.

40. 41.

539x 852 304

Most boys are circumcised when six or seven years old, and the day is always celebrated by some festivity, at which the boy is decked out and led through the streets.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
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40.

[x539] The father hurries home to the festivity.

[304]
[852]

'Addīni, ya-m'addāwi!
an-arauwaḥ baladi
warauwaḥ bis-salāme
waṭāhir waladi.

Ferry me over, ferryman!
I wish to go to my village
And go safely,
And have my son circumcised.

[113] J. H. Churi, in Sea Nile the Desert etc. London 1853, p. 309 (reprinted by Buecher, Arbeit und Rhythmus, p. 429) gives this song with a melody. The first two verses are also to be found in a song of Egyptian origin, which was dictated to Dalman (p. 141) by a sailor in Sidon.

41.

[301] [292] The women are decking out the boy for the procession, with a necklace and a ṭarbûsh (compare No. 24). The mother speaks:

El-'o'd 'o'di, wan-aldumo be-hawāye!
Gibt eṭ-ṭarābîš, labbasû-li ḥadāye,
we-'adūit ummo rāide ḥaṭṭāye!

The necklace is my necklace, and I shall string it as I please!
I have brought the ṭarbûsh, dress him (the boy) here before me,
(So smartly) that the enemy of his mother will be sick (from envy)!

[114] 3. This is Maḥmûd's interpretation, but it may be that he is wrong in this interpretation, which demands râqide instead of rāide.

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

796 574 order to add life to an entertainment gentlemen often send for singers, instrumentalists, and dancers, the last of whom are generally in great request on the evenings of this month. The religious element is represented by a schoolmaster who recites the Koran in another room, and who is expressly hired for the month, or an educated slave or a son may perform this office. Other feasts, such as circumcisions or marriages, are never celebrated in the sacred month. Sittings of the courts are commonly held and the more important official business performed at night. It is not till towards midnight that quietness prevails; the muezzin calls, and soon after, a cry is heard and a warning shot sounds over the town intimating that it is time to prepare for the last meal. If any person has failed to notice this he is warned by individuals who about this time wander singly through the town from house to house beating a drum. The "vigil-meal" consists of the remains of the principal meal warmed up, or of meat fried with butter and articles made of flour, such as are at other times prepared for breakfast. Two hours after the boom of the cannon is again heard, the fast has to begin and along with it the same routine. Such is the sacred month of Ramadan, the great month of fasting and also of feasting, for which the women during the following month sing songs of regret as if for a loved one departed.

796 [852] [585] [692] 964 796 [202] 796 [285] [533]

THE GREAT AND THE LITTLE FEAST.

796 In the three following days of the next month, Shaual, the "Little Feast," the "Little Bairam" of the Turks, is celebrated. It begins, as every day does, in the evening. The women have made ready bread and butter and sugar-cakes, the men dress themselves in their best, and the barbers are occupied till late at night in attending to their customers. On this evening three cannon shots proclaim that the fast has now come to an end. After supper everybody goes early to bed, but before sunrise all the men are in the mosque offering up their feast-day prayers, and listening to the feast-day sermon, which does not last much longer

[262] [202] [785]

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

844 ments the poor child of humanity till it sickens and falls
[716] into convulsions, which are therefore also called karina (see
[753] chap. vii.). Immediately after the birth the mother receives
melted butter with honey and fenugreck, and instead of
[262] fasting she must daily eat at least a fowl or a good piece of
meat, which her female friends and neighbours give her. On
846 the sixth day the mother in her turn sends these a plate of
kishk (decoction of wheat and sour milk) as a sign that they
are invited for the following day. Above the head of the
sleeping child is placed on this night a pitcher, hung with
[789] gold coins and lighted with tapers, the pitcher being long-
necked (*dorûk*) in the case of boys, short-necked (*kulleh*) in
that of girls.

846 On the morning of the seventh day (*yum es-subâ'a*) the
852 house is filled with female visitors. The child is placed upon
a sieve, tapers are fixed upon metal plates and on the point
of a sword, and the child is carried in procession through the
whole house, while the midwife scatters *bissle*, that is, wheat,
[787] barley, pease, and salt as provender for the wicked spirits.
[776] The child is shaken in the sieve, being thereby believed to
lose fear for the rest of its life, and its eyes are held up to
the sun to sharpen them. The cymbals and small drums,
the singing and trilling of the women, make the outer world
acquainted with the joy within the house. The guests present
[431] the mother and midwife with money and gold, for which
[262] they distribute parched chick-peas, St. John's bread, and
walnuts.

But the father must also keep the seventh day as a festival, especially if the child is a boy, though in many cases he does not dare up till this time to look upon his own child, since he might possibly, and quite against his will, do some harm to his tender offspring by a glance of his eye. He invites his friends to a feast, and entertains them with Koran reading, zikrs, and similar pious amusements, or sends for instrumental players, singers, and dancing-girls. The son is brought in a
[431] sieve and shown to the guests, who rejoice with the father,
[553] and perhaps also leave some gifts. A plate of candy-sugar is now sent to the kadi or some other theologian; he sucks

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

846 852 553

it, and lets the sweet fluid trickle from his consecrated mouth into that of the child, and "gives him the name out of his mouth." This is accordingly a kind of baptism. It is well known that among the Moslim, as among the native Christians, and till lately among the Jews of the West, only personal (and not family) names are used even in public life. For distinction the personal name of one's father is joined to one's own name, as Mohammed Soliman, that is, Mohammed, son of Soliman. Many have of course a surname, but it is generally personal, as for instance, the Bald, the One-eyed, the Falcon, and so forth, and only in rare cases is retained as a family name. In recent times the desire of acquiring a family name is showing itself, especially among government officials. This custom has of course the advantage that it leaves no room for pride of noble or patrician descent. Only the descendants of the prophets, the *sherifs*, of whom there are millions, pride themselves on their birth, and generally marry only among themselves. Still more the Bedouin, who is said to be able to repeat his pedigree in personal names alone up to Abraham and Adam, like the genealogies in the Bible, and who knows the pedigree of his horse equally well.

551 [178] [582]

On the fortieth day after childbirth the mother goes with the child to the bath, and gets forty dishfuls of water poured over her head if her offspring is a boy, and thirty-nine if it is a girl. The child also is now bathed for the first time, and mother and child are now clean and purified.

846 852 [801] [783]

CEREMONIES PRELIMINARY TO FAMILY FESTIVALS.

The more important family festivals, as a circumcision or a marriage, are often preceded by a whole round of preliminary ceremonies that last for weeks, or even months, and take place every evening. The master of the house prides himself in giving a feast that will be long spoken of. Every evening he gathers together his friends in his hospitable dwelling, and provides for them amusements and entertainments of every form and kind. At present chess, draughts, dominoes, and other games are played, but not for money, or at most for a

527 [524] [779]